#96

X-FORCE

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

MIGHTY MARVEL'S MUTANT GENESIS MAKEOVER!

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A FICTIONEER PUBLICATION

Comics Buyer's Guide
Fan Awards for 1990

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COMICS INTERVIEW

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UP FRONT

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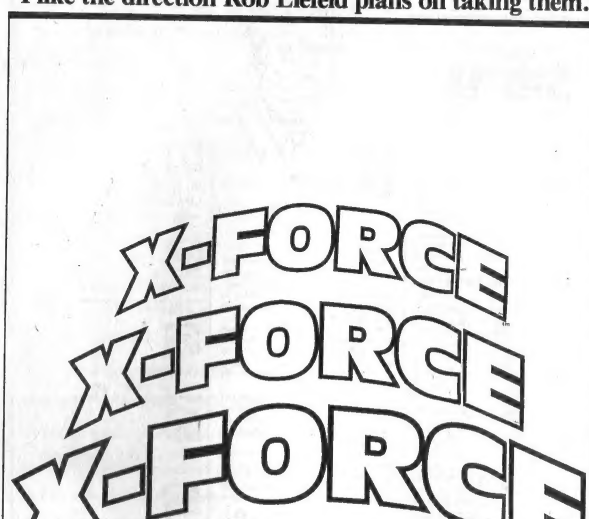
"I like the direction Rob Liefeld plans on taking them."



Fabian Nicieza has an interesting job. He edits what he calls an "eclectic" line of comics for Marvel — a line that includes BARBIE, SWEET XVI, ALF, DAMAGE CONTROL and WONDER MAN. He has also just taken on the assignment of writing dialogue for the newest of the mutant titles — X-FORCE. I began the interview by asking why he had chosen to accept a script-only assignment . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *One of the first things I have to ask is, you've gained a pretty good reputation as a writer at this point, the stuff you have written has gotten good reviews, why take a step back and only dialogue somebody else's plots?*

FABIAN NICIEZA: It's not a step back. Anything of that nature is always in the perception of the individual. My perception is that I don't take steps forward, I don't take steps back, I just try to do as good a job as I possibly can on what I am asked to do. **Rob Liefeld** and I have been friends for several years now, more through phone conversations than anything. From way back when he was first doing HAWK & DOVE. Rob, believe it or not, enjoyed PSI-FORCE back when I was writing it with **Ron Lim.** Rob had talked about wanting to develop himself as a plotter and a writer but he didn't feel comfortable scripting. He has more ideas for one issue than most writers have for an entire year's worth of stories. He needed help with the scripting and he asked me and I said I wouldn't mind at all because it is good for me also. It's an exercise, it's a different approach to what I have to do. If anything, it helped my writing in other regards. I actually enjoy doing it so it's not a step back. I look forward to being able to script the X-FORCE material whenever I can. It's not like I don't have any input into the book, either, because Rob is always talking to me about individual issues, story and character directions. I get to input quite a bit. A time has not yet come that there is something in the book that I so strongly disagree with that there would be any problems. So far I like the direction that Rob plans on taking the characters in and I enjoy writing the characters because they are so very different from the characters I write in NEW WARRIORS.

PAT: *Since you don't have the same type of concentration on a plot book as you do on a book like NEW WARRIORS where you're doing plot and script, does this mean that you can take a little more*

All artwork accompanying this interview is ©1991 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc.

"The X-FORCE characters don't seem to enjoy talking."

time and concentrate a little more heavily on plotting an individual voice for each character?

FABIAN: Nah, who has time? *(Laughter.)* The way I approach it is that the group by their very nature has a different voice. The whole approach to the book, that Rob and I discussed, and my approach to it, is based on several articles and books I read regarding young people and war. Essentially reality-based material on how war affects teenagers over a period of time. How it affects fourteen-and fifteen-year-olds when they are being asked to fight. I've been reading some of the most recent articles in TIME MAGAZINE on the Children of War. They're all very hard-edged and basically very cynical. It is a matter of fact that the humor is going to be dark humor because of the lifestyle that has been chosen for them — they don't talk as much either — I notice that I write more dialogue in NEW WARRIORS. In NEW WARRIORS they enjoy talking to each other and they enjoy conversing with each other. The X-FORCE characters don't seem to enjoy talking to each other as much yet. They're still kind of new to each other. Things could start to develop as they start to bond together as a unit. They understand that what they have chosen to do is not exactly open to conversation. I don't see them sitting around talking about Magnum like they used to do. It's more about the fighting they are doing. It may be considered grim and is certainly a different approach for me.

PAT: *Tell us a little bit more about the direction of X-FORCE. You said that some of the characterizations are based on what happens to young people during war time. I take it this is going to look at the relationship between mutants and humans as a war.*

FABIAN: Not so much between mutants and humans as much as the forces in the Marvel Universe that seek to both dominate and manipulate both humans and mutants. X-FORCE is not a mutants versus humans team. If anything it is just an extension of the Avengers. They are socially responsible for doing the right thing by stopping those that would do the wrong thing. The matter is though with the extremes and the levels that

Here and throughout . . . artwork from Marvel's newest mutant book, X-FORCE, illustrated by Rob Liefeld.

"I see myself as a multi-faceted personality in my

X-Force is willing to go to accomplish those goals.

PAT: *Is there any concern with you, Rob, or Bob Harris in the fact that you are setting X-Force up as the ones that determine what is right or wrong? That is on some pretty shaky ground morally.*

FABIAN: Yep, that's the idea. Out of that comes interesting conflicts for characters. Out of that comes interesting dilemmas for the characters and how other characters perceive them. It's the same dilemma Captain America faces when he confronts Punisher. That is exactly what we have in mind. It gives the book a very different and fresh perspective on the mutant-oriented titles.

PAT: *Could you run down the list of characters and give me a brief description of them?*

FABIAN: Sure. Cable, the drill sergeant that does whatever is necessary to accomplish the job — a job that he knows better than anyone else.

Domino, Bonnie to Cable's Clyde, a woman who can get hip deep in shit when needed but can come out of it smelling like a rose.

Cannonball, the man with a conscience. He is faced with the moral dilemma between doing what he thinks has to be done and doing what he thinks should be done.

Boom-Boom, the insecure and depressed young woman who, through her actions on the team, has found a sense of belonging. No matter how twisted or warped it may be.

Warpath is a man who has spent his entire time being oppressed and has found an outlet to return some of that rage in a clinical and organized fashion.

Shatter Star, a young man who has been raised to be a warrior and to fight for entertainment as well as a cause. When he fights he does so for both the sake of the cause and for entertainment. His cause is trying to get X-Force to come back to his dimension to help him out.

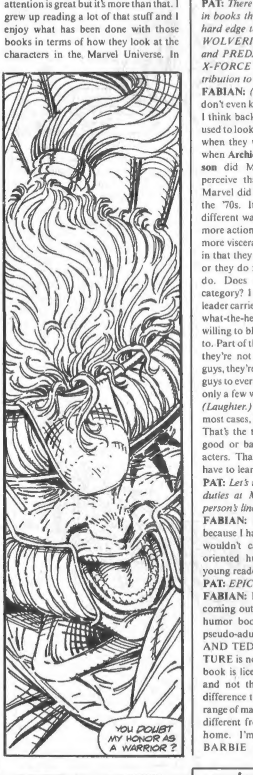
Finally, Feral, who is the one what Rob and I have a lot of interesting plans for. A lot of people think she is a Wolfsbane clone and you'll see she's not. She can be summarized as being very dangerous. Think of her as the house cat that would come home with a mouse in its mouth to show it off to you.

PAT: *What is it that drew you to X-FORCE as an assignment?*

FABIAN: I don't know, I'm a machine damn it, they just turn me on and I operate. *(Laughter.)* I think that what interested me the most was that it enabled me the opportunity to do and say some of the things about young super heroes. If I'm going to work in the comics medium, and working for Marvel I understand the parameters under which I am able to operate, I am able to do and say certain things about young super heroes, in the Marvel Universe, that I can't do in NEW WARRIORS because it's not appropriate to those characters. It's a different side of the coin that I wanted to deal with. It wouldn't be appropriate in NEW WARRORS. And I knew that going in so I found an outlet for some of the things that I would like to say. Also, it is good writing exercise, scripting off of someone else's plot. It keeps me fresh and I feel that it will help me on my other writing material as well by teaching me a bit of brevity in regards

ability to understand a publishing company."

to the other work that I do. Plus the fact that I enjoy working with Rob and Bob and being a part of the Marvel Mutant Universe. Of course, the money and attention is great but it's more than that. I grew up reading a lot of that stuff and I enjoy what has been done with those books in terms of how they look at the characters in the Marvel Universe. In many ways it is quite an honor to get into that club because they (the mutant titles) are the best selling books in the industry and have been for over a decade.



PAT: *There has been a growing interest in books that have been said to have a hard edge to them, THE PUNISHER, WOLVERINE, Dark Horse's ALIEN and PREDATOR. Do you see perhaps X-FORCE being the mutant team contribution to that trend?*

FABIAN: *(Laughter.)* I don't know. I don't even know if I would call it a trend. I think back to a lot of the books that I used to look at in '70s and I think back to when they were revamping BATMAN; when **Archie Goodwin** and **Walt Simonson** did MANHUNTER, you could perceive that as a gritty, dark book. Marvel did TOMB OF DRACULA in the '70s. It's just being shown in a different way. Whether that's by having more action/violence content, let's say a more visceral approach to the characters in that they do not pretend to be heroes or they do not preach about what they do. Does X-FORCE fall into that category? I guess it does, I mean their leader carries around a big I-don't-know-what-the-heck-it-does gun and they're willing to blow people away if they have to. Part of their charm, if you will, is that they're not out to apprehend the bad guys, they're out to never allow those bad guys to ever do bad things again. There is only a few ways to accomplish that goal. *(Laughter.)* They appoint themselves, in most cases, judge, jury, and executioner. That's the thing, I don't know if that's good or bad and neither do the characters. That's something that they will have to learn about as they go along.

PAT: *Let's talk a little about your other duties at Marvel. You edit the young person's line . . .*

FABIAN: I call it the "eclectic line" because I have a little bit of everything. I wouldn't call EPIC LITE, an adult-oriented humor book, a part of the young reader line . . .

PAT: *EPIC LITE?*

FABIAN: Right, EPIC LITE, a book coming out this fall that I'm editing. A humor book for pseudo-sophisticated, pseudo-adult people. *(Laughter.)* BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE is not a young reader book. The book is licensed from the PG-13 movie and not the cartoon — there's a big difference there. I'm editing a very wide range of material which is fun because it's different from what I write when I go home. I'm editing ALF, BARBIE, BARBIE FASHION, BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE, DAMAGE CONTROL, DOUBLE DRAGON, KID N' PLAY, SWEET XVI, and WONDER MAN.

PAT: *Does writing a book like X-FORCE help you counter-balance the sweetness and goodness of the titles you edit like BARBIE and ALF?*

FABIAN: I think it works the other way around. The sweetness of the stuff that I work with in the office helps counter-balance what I have to do at home. I see

"I'm a machine. They just turn me on and I operate."

myself as a multi-faceted personality in regards to my ability to understand that I work for a publishing company that publishes to a broad spectrum of readers. I think it is obvious, when you look at what I edit and what I write, that I believe in that. You have not seen any ALF covers with blood-splattered, executed people on it because I think it will sell. *(Laughter.)* I understand that as a publishing company we should sell to as many different people as possible. That includes little kids, little girls. We need more people in the industry and we won't have older readers unless we cultivate younger readers. That is part of my job, to try to cultivate younger readers. I basically want people to pick up our books and enjoy them.

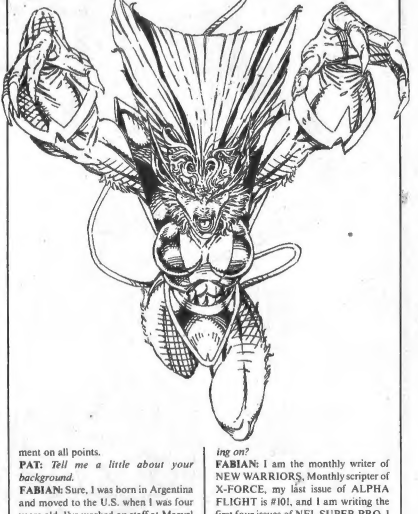
PAT: *How closely have you worked with marketing and promotions? You used to work in those capacities so you have the background. How do you get books like BARBIE to the young female readers? Obviously they are not your average weekly denizens that frequent comic shops.*

FABIAN: And you know, I think that comic book shops, for the most part, are deathly afraid of having that kind of an audience. It's unfortunate. The good ones are pushing it but the ones that are afraid of it are staying away from it with ten-foot poles. My job can only go as far as alerting the sales and promotional department about the material we have. Much of it is budgetary considerations. In order to establish a wide commercial appeal for this type of material we need increased budgets to get the word out. We're doing a lot with school programs and subscription programs. BARBIE FASHION was involved in a subscription program and it is by far Marvel's highest subscription title that we have. Subs for BARBIE FASHION are three to one over X-MEN. There are different venues we can explore and we are doing just that. We are expanding our ability to do that. Being a part of promotion is sort of a double edge sword because I understand the necessity of stepping back and allowing them to do their work as it should be done. It sometimes gets a little frustrating because I am aware of the nuts and bolts and would like to dive in myself and help out. We will be doing all we can to promote these titles both in the direct market and on the newsstand.

PAT: *Given your druthers, would you prefer concentrating on being the best editor you can be or on being the best writer you can be?*

FABIAN: Given my druthers, which would I prefer to concentrate on? Unfortunately, I think I'm operating about 80% at both right now instead of 100%. Evan, my assistant, just said we don't give Fabian druthers around here.

"I've worked on staff at Marvel for over five years."



(Laughter.) Let me answer it this way, I don't have my druthers right now. I am expected, and I expect of myself, to do as good as I possibly can at both. Ultimately it's out of my hands to determine which I'm doing my best at. That's up to my boss in house and up to the readers' public eye. I haven't gotten too many complaints so I guess I'm doing okay at both. By the same token, I would prefer to do better at both. I would like my books to sell more, be one schedule more, and I would like my writing to be better. What I concentrate on more of is my writing because the creative aspect is something that is inherent in me. I guess it is a fire inside of me that fuels me, so yeah, I concentrate more of my personal time and attention to writing. But, on the other hand, I'm here between 8:30 and 9:00 every day and I don't leave until 6 p.m. so I must be me doing my job also. I guess if I had my druthers, what it boils down to is that the writing means most to me because it is a part of me. That doesn't mean that I don't lack focus or direction on my editing job. Except when people like **Pat O'Neill** call and take me away from my work. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *What do you see as your strong points as an editor?*

FABIAN: I've only been doing it a year now so I don't know if I can even answer that myself. **Evan Skolnik** is my assistant so he should know best.

EVAN SKOLNIK: Fabian's strong points are the fact that he's open to new ideas and to new talent. Fabian has a general affection for what he's doing and that really comes through in his work.

FABIAN: Well, I guess that sums up my editing strong points. My strongest point as an editor is that I'm further ahead on my schedule than **Ralph Macchio** is. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *And your strong points as a writer?*

FABIAN: *(Laughter.)* Evan just said I suck as a writer. *(Laughter.)* If I have a strong point as a writer I think it is the ability to plot a story so that it has an effect on the characters. I try not to let any of my stories just be about confrontations. I try to have the confrontations mean something to the character in the story. I guess that would be my strongest point. For example, in issue #10 of NEW WARRIORS I called it RUMBLE because it was a rumble. I approached it as a major break-up between two, three-part stories and I just wanted numbing action. I still need a lot of work as a scripter but for now the character involvement in my storytelling is important. I see room for improvement on all points.

PAT: *Tell me a little about your background.*

FABIAN: Sure, I was born in Argentina and moved to the U.S. when I was four years old. I've worked on staff at Marvel for over five years and have been writing for three and a half years. My original staff job was in the manufacturing department. Four months later I moved over to the promotions department, which is what I went to school for. I have a B.A. in Communications and Advertising from Rutgers College in New Brunswick. I worked at Berkley Publishing before Marvel and also had a one-year internship at ABC TV during my senior year in college. Actually, I interviewed at both DC and Marvel right out of college. **Steve Saffel** got the job I interviewed for at Marvel because he was older and had more experience. I don't know who they hired at DC. I did go through two or three rounds of interviews at DC.

PAT: *To summarize your current writing, what books are you now working on?*

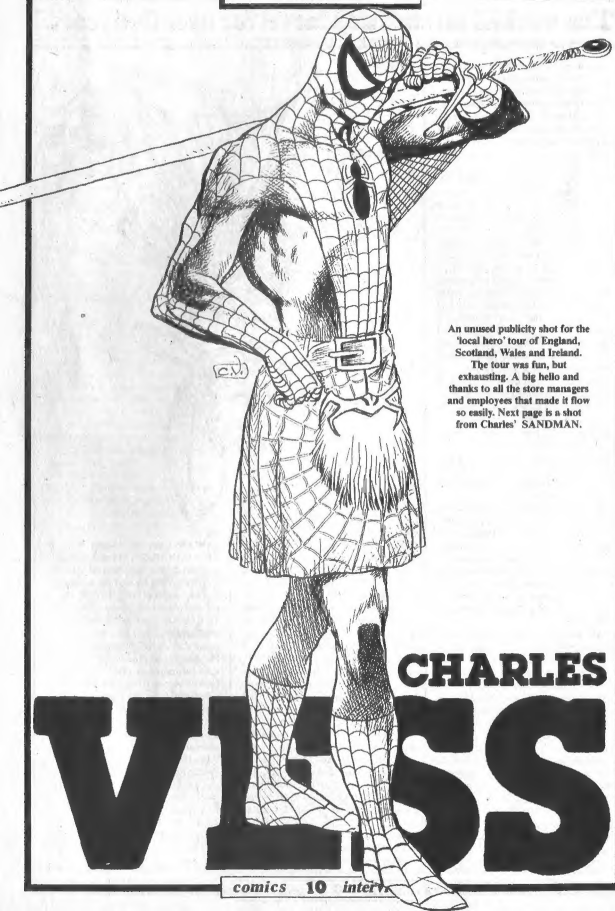
FABIAN: I am the monthly writer of NEW WARRIORS, Monthly scripter of X-FORCE, my last issue of ALPHA FLIGHT is #101, and I am writing the first four issues of NFL SUPER PRO. I am also writing the four-part ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AMERICA serial which should be coming out this summer, come hell, high water, or **Kevin McGuire's** head. *(Laughter.)* All I can say is as frustrating as that experience has been it's been well worth the wait, folks. I perceive it to be my best work period. I am also working on developing Nomad as a regular series for 1992. I'm taking my time with it because I was very disappointed with the limted series.

PAT: *That's a pretty impressive list . . .*

FABIAN: Yes, well, I should mention that I'm also doing the summer annuals for the X-books.

PAT: *You're writing all of them?*

FABIAN: Yes, NEW MUTANTS, NEW WARRIORS, X-MEN and X-FACTOR. Look for those books in May and June.



CHARLES VESS

An unused publicity shot for the 'local hero' tour of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The tour was fun, but exhausting. A big hello and thanks to all the store managers and employees that made it flow so easily. Next page is a shot from Charles' SANDMAN.

Spider-Man and Daredevil ®1991 M.E.G. / Sandman, Swamp Thing ®1991 DC Comics.

"Deep shadows become a plot device by themselves."

Last issue in the first part of this interview with Vess, Charles spoke of his two passions, superheroes and Scotland. He also said a word or two about once writing the Wendigo, as well as what an artist can learn from studying film noir.

Here in the second and final part, Vess vocalizes about a variety of surprising subjects . . .

PAT JANKIEWICZ: *What's the worst job you've ever had?*

CHARLES: Probably doing the cover for a gaming company called THE CREATURE THAT ATE SHEBOYGAN. It was a giant Godzilla creature chomping on some cars and destroying a street. The art director wanted fingers, not a mind, just fingers to finish what he sketched out. If you made any deviation whatsoever in his little sketch then you painted it over. It didn't pay much and it wasn't fun!

PAT: *You've done lots of interesting covers. Have any favorites?*

CHARLES: Well, I liked WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #1, I thought that turned out really nice. I also like the cover I did to SPIRITS OF THE EARTH, and the covers to MARVEL FANFARE #s 34-37, the WARRIORS THREE saga. I also did the interiors on those four books.

PAT: *Do you have a particularly favorite scene in SPIRITS?*

CHARLES: My favorite thing in it is when Spider-Man has gone to a local church where the town's people are having a giant meeting. Everyone's been haunted already by these ghosts and goblins. They are kind of uptight about it. After the meeting they come out of the church only to have the castle above the village burst into light, and all these screaming creatures come out of it, flood down to the church and explode into a big light show.

Spider-Man's been hiding on top of the roof, watching what's been going on, and this burst of light reveals him. They mistake him for a demon, and what happens next is sort of a Keystone Cops sequence: They're chasing him in this village that of course only has buildings two stories high; he can't get away from them. There's only a dozen buildings and they're surrounded by either the loch (lake) or the giant moorlands. It's a very silly, funny scene, but it could be very serious because the villagers want to kill him and he knows they're not criminals so he won't fight back.

All he is doing is trying to get away from them, so he tries hiding in a house,

A commissioned piece of Swamp Thing and Abigail.

"It's disconcerting, finding a street full of sleeping cows."

but a yapping dog chases him away. Then he turns a corner and finds the street filled with sleeping cows. That happened to me once or twice coming out of a pub in Scotland, so I knew it can really happen.

PAT: *You must have thought you were drunk!* (Laughter.) *Usually it's elephants.*

CHARLES: Yes, it's very disconcerting walking out a doorway and finding the street filled with sleeping cows. The street is warm, they're not fenced in, so they just lie in the street. There are not many cars, you see, to disturb them.

PAT: *What's your writing background?*

CHARLES: I just read a lot! I do a lot of reading outside of the field, regular fiction, some science fiction, some

"There's a pub in Scotland where I had many a whiskey!"

fantasy, a lot of Scottish literature. I'm a Scotty-o-phile! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Were you worried about the cover price precluding some people from affording the book?*

CHARLES: No, I wasn't. I think we put enough extras in to sweeten the pot so it's worth it. But for those who couldn't afford it in hardback, it will eventually be in paperback. I've approached the project as if it were a book — I've done a cover stamping for it, a very elaborate drawing that will be used as the endpapers for the inside cover and for the first page. I've designed a title page with just a little touch of Mucha to it. At the end of the book I've put a journal of my travels in Scotland, with drawings, photographs and paintings that were done on the spot. I certainly think it deserves the price it got, it's very nice.

PAT: *Will any friends in Scotland be getting a copy of the book?*

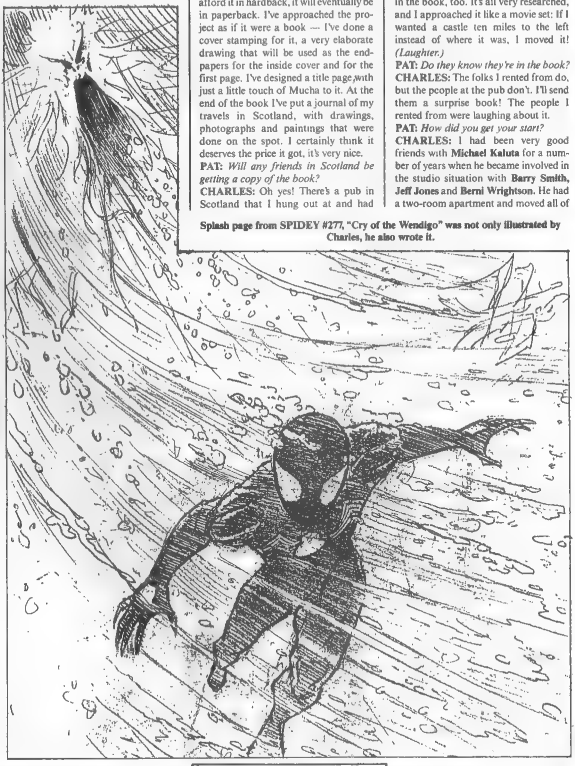
CHARLES: Oh yes! There's a pub in Scotland that I hung out at and had many a whiskey! *(Laughter.)* I rusticated it a bit, but all the people in the pub and the people I rented my cottage from, are in the book. The town I was in is featured in the book, too. It's all very researched, and I approached it like a movie set: If I wanted a castle ten miles to the left instead of where it was, I moved it! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Do they know they're in the book?*

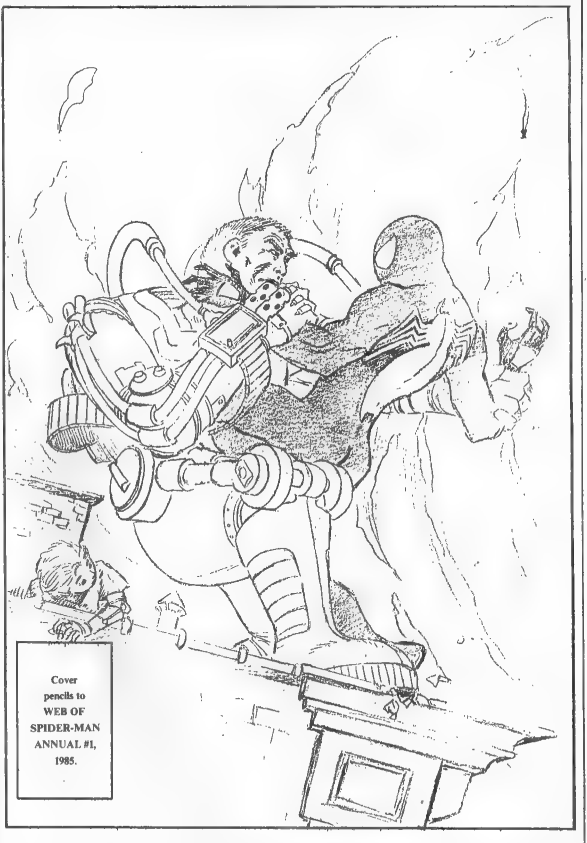
CHARLES: The folks I rented from do, but the people at the pub don't. I'll send them a surprise book! The people I rented from were laughing about it.

PAT: *How did you get your start?*

CHARLES: I had been very good friends with **Michael Kaluta** for a number of years when he became involved in the studio situation with **Barry Smith, Jeff Jones** and **Berni Wrightson.** He had a two-room apartment and moved all of



Splash page from SPIDEY #277, "Cry of the Wendigo" was not only illustrated by Charles, he also wrote it.



Cover pencils to WEB OF SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #1, 1985.

"I enjoy subtlety a lot, and it's not very often

his stuff out of one of those rooms and down into the studio. He then needed someone to stay in the empty room and he asked "You wanna move to New York?" (I was living in Richmond, Virginia at the time.) I dropped everything and moved. Those first years in New York I was hanging out with those studio guys and I heard many horror stories about the comics business. They had all quit comics at that time and didn't want to have anything more to do with it. I heeded their advice and didn't approach any of the publishers for a long time.

Over the next four or five years, though, the whole political atmosphere of comics changed. They started doing creator-owned projects and royalty systems. Quite a bit changed. So when **Archie Goodwin** walked by at a convention and asked me to do a story for EPIC ILLUSTRATED, I was happy to do it. I'd always drawn comics and enjoy telling stories, so it was a nice opportunity. After several more stories for EPIC, **Al Milgrom** asked me to do a story for MARVEL FANFARE, and it just snowballed from there.

PAT: *Before you did SPIRITS, what was your favorite project?*

CHARLES: An illustrated book of A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, the **William Shakespeare** play. I did it about two years ago for Donning Starblaze. Not many people saw it, because they didn't distribute it very well. Interestingly enough, I've just finished an issue of THE SANDMAN, #19, and it's a play on that play. The writer has come up with a story where **William Shakespeare** has agreed to some deal with the Sandman to be able to write, and his group of traveling players have gone down to the East Sussex Downs of England to perform A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM for the very first time.

However, the troupe doesn't know who they're doing it for. They get down there and the Sandman meets them and says "Go over there and set up." Then the Sandman opens the portals between our world and the world of Faerie, and the real Oberon, Titania, Puck and the hosts of Faerie come out and watch the play that has been written about them. The story is the interaction between the two. **Neil Gaiman,** the regular writer of the series, wrote it, and it's a one-issue thing.

PAT: *Charles, who are some of your influences in your work? I see some Hal Foster —*

CHARLES: Oh yes -- **Hal Foster!** Even earlier than that, there's illustrators like **Arthur Rackham, Howard Pyle,** N.C. **Wyeth, Franklin Booth,** etc., etc.

I've studied many, many illustrators over the years. Each artist leads you to yet another artist. You follow the trail of influences just like you're Sherlock Holmes, sleuth of the aesthetic. Each and every artist has their own influences and in his turn influences others. None of us work in a vacuum, you know.

Hal Foster can lead you to **Frank Frazetta. Frazetta** leads you to **Jeff Jones** and **Berni Wrightson.** Berni brings you to **Sam Kieth** or **Kelley Jones.** And Sam and Kelley in their turn are probably casting their artistic influences into a new generation even as we speak. Life goes on.

PAT: *Do you like doing overt super-hero stories?*

CHARLES: I enjoy subtlety a lot, and it's not very often that you can get that into a super-hero story. It's more often that the problem is solved with a fist rather than with the character's wits. So I haven't done very many super-hero stories, and probably won't. But every once in a while I can find a twist on it. I'm working on a WOLVERINE idea with **Mark Askwith** that is very, very different and really interesting and I'm pretty excited about it. Like SPIRITS, the WOLVERINE idea is also interested in the Earth and the power that's in it. It's about dealing with nature as an identity and the powers within.

PAT: *Tell us about it!*

CHARLES: *(Smiling)* No, no, no, not yet!

PAT: *So, were you into comics as a kid?*

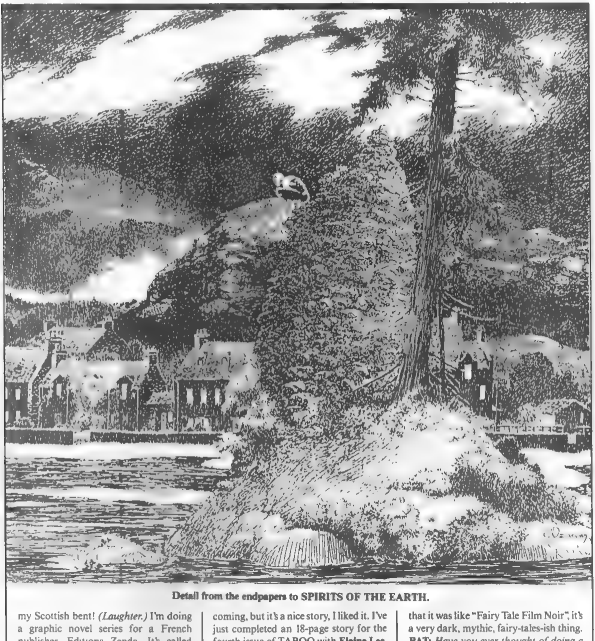
CHARLES: Oh yes! I grew up reading UNCLE SCROOGE, and then I discovered THE FANTASTIC FOUR in a barber shop, and then had to convince my parents to drive me to the newsstand every week. I would scrounge pennies, or steal them from my brother (oops, now the awful truth be known — sorry bro!) to buy the latest issues of FANTASTIC FOUR and SPIDER-MAN. I think the first one I bought was issue #4.

PAT: *So what else is on-the-boards for you?*

CHARLES: Well, I'm working on the third issue of THE BOOKS OF MAGIC, which is a 4-issue prestige format thing for DC where each issue is done by a different artist. **John Bolton** did the first one, **Scott Hampton** is the second one, I'm the third one and **Paul Johnson** is the fourth. I'm planning to adapt MACBETH for CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, continuing along on

that you can get that into a superhero story."

"I do projects that don't have strict deadlines attached."



Detail from the endpapers to SPIRITS OF THE EARTH.

my Scottish bent! *(Laughter.)* I'm doing a graphic novel series for a French publisher, Editions Zenda. It's called SKADE, and it's with a Canadian writer, **Rob Walton.** It's a dark, brooding Nordic tale.

PAT: *How did you get hooked up with TABOO?*

CHARLES: I've known **Steve Bissette** for years and as soon as he started coming up with the idea for TABOO, he asked "If you wanna do something, I'd love to have something of yours in there." The only other story that I dreamed, appeared in TABOO #1, "The Scarecrow." I dreamed it in 1972, and I finally drew the story in 1987. It took a long time coming, but it's a nice story, I liked it. I've just completed an 18-page story for the fourth issue of TABOO with **Elaine Lee,** writer of STARSTRUCK and STEEL-TOWN ROCKERS (although with that last project she's not real happy). It's called "Morrigan Tales" and we've been working on it for quite awhile. The story was done in its first version for the backup of SABRE #1, but now it's been adapted, adopted and improved and expanded to its correct length, told in the right way. It's in glorious black and white!

PAT: *Was it fun doing a horror comic, so to speak?*

CHARLES: Yes! My thoughts on it was that it was like "Fairy Tale Film Noir", it's a very dark, mythic, fairy-tales-ish thing.

PAT: *Have you ever thought of doing a book on a monthly basis?*

CHARLES: *(Adamantly)* Never! You can't concentrate long enough on the drawing, inking and coloring on the book for *me* to be satisfied. If I'm not enjoying doing what I'm doing, then I get bored and I get slower and slower and never finish the job.

PAT: *Sounds like you'd be perfect for GHOST RIDER!* (Laughter.)

CHARLES: I've learned, at 39 years of age, what I can do and what I do are special projects that don't have strict deadlines attached

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW GROUP

#1
1991

CATALOG

TROVE OF RARE ISSUES THANKS TO MILE HIGH

Thanks to a recent bulk purchase from Mile High — where we were fortunate to locate and latch onto some long out-of-print warehouse copies of COMICS INTERVIEW — we are proud to be able to restore our stock and once more offer a near full complement of original INTERVIEW back issues to fill the demand from all you completists and enthusiasts out there.

Not only that, but the re-stocking also results in more good news: We've actually been able to *lower* the prices on some of the scarce and sought-after issues, such as the original first printings of #6, #31 and # 65, among quite a few others. So making rare or sold-out issues available again not only unclutters the gallery of COMICS INTERVIEW covers by removing those annoying "sold out" banners — but also makes ordering classic collector's item issues a lot easier on your wallet, as well.

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And thanks to all of you who've helped prove my editorial point (in issue #24) about limited circulation magazines such as COMICS INTERVIEW — loaded with cover art, photos and illustrations unseen in the mega-circulation comics mainstream — being the *true* collector's items in times to come.

~David

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UP FRONT

"The Art of Conversation"

One of life's rare pleasures is good conversation--and what a pleasure it can be! Especially when it's on subjects near and dear to our hearts, subjects of specialized personal interest such as, in our case -- comics.

Discussions about the skills of good writing and drawing, what constitutes good comics, the many and varied influences at play upon different folks in different places working in the same field at the same time...these are not topics likely to come up often in the course of common conversation. That is, unless you count yourself among the fortunate few who spend their lives doing comics for a living. And even then, the disciplines involved in doing creative work call for a high degree of solitude, so the opportunities to engage in a meaningful exchange of ideas with fellow creators can be few and far between for some.

COMICS INTERVIEW is rich in good conversation. Whether or not you care for the comics work of the folks interviewed here, I think you'll find a wealth of insight and intelligence in what they have to say -- and some mighty fine conversation.

-Dan

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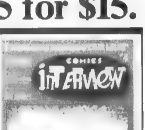

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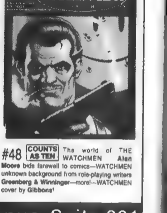

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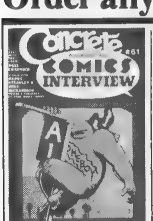

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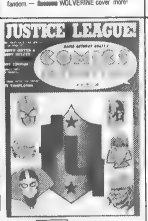

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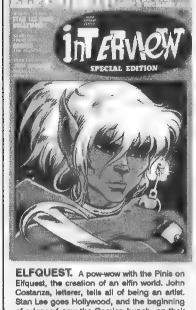

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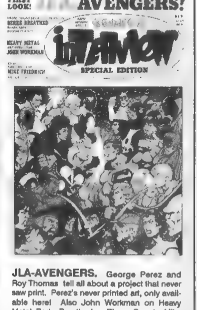

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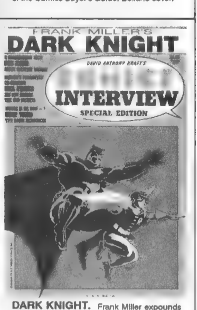
ROBOTECH. Carl Macek & Neil Vokes - from TV to comics - tell why Robotech's a hit. Phil Foglio - Hugo Award winning Sci-Fi artist mumbles about Myth-Adventures, and Cat Yronwode on art for art sake and comics for comics sake. More. Vokes & Rankin cover.

ELEKTRA. The evolution of Elektra. Frank Miller on ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN and the DAREDEVIL graphic novel to come. "a huge, expansive, embroidered origin story, much like BATMAN: YEAR ONE!" Bill Sienkiewicz on ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN. More. Sienkiewicz cover



DARK KNIGHT. Frank Miller expounds on his magnum opus. Fred Finger, on his father, Bill. Bob Kane, on the last 50 yrs since Bat birth. Jerry Robinson, on past memories. Burt Ward on the trouble with tights, and George Rousos on the early days. Miller cover.

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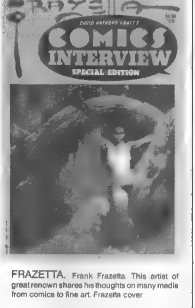

FRAZETTA. Frank Frazetta. This artist of great renown shares his thoughts on many media from comics to fine art. Frazetta cover

SEX & VIOLENCE IN COMICS. Frank Miller, John Byrne, Jerry Parles together with Ron Turner all expound on the limits and far-reaching effects of laws and perceptions. Plus an open forum from the star-reach Chicago trade show on the censorship theme.

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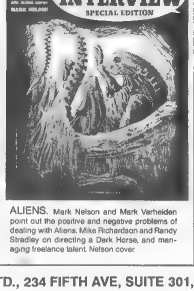

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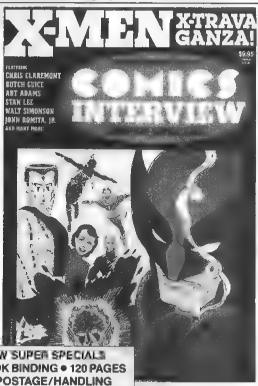

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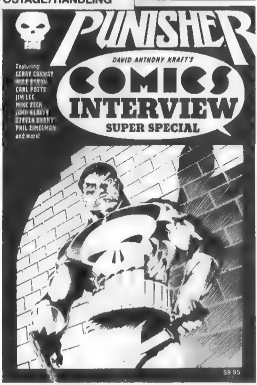

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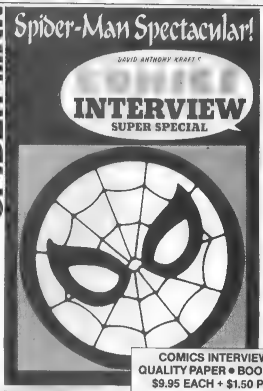

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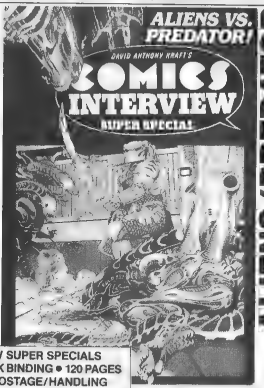

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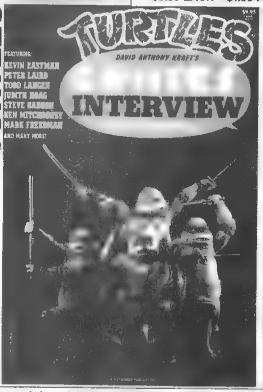

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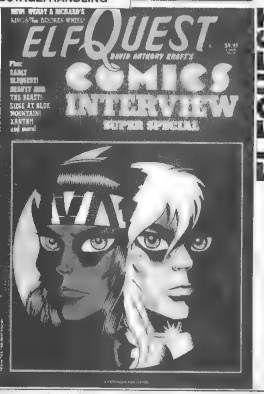

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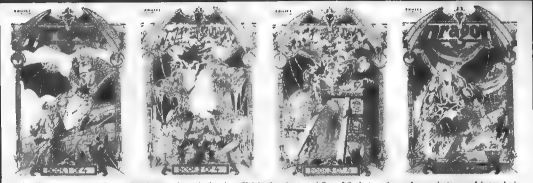

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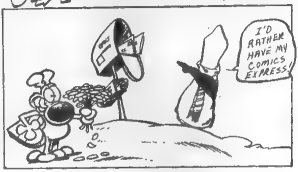

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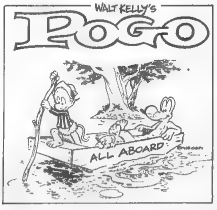

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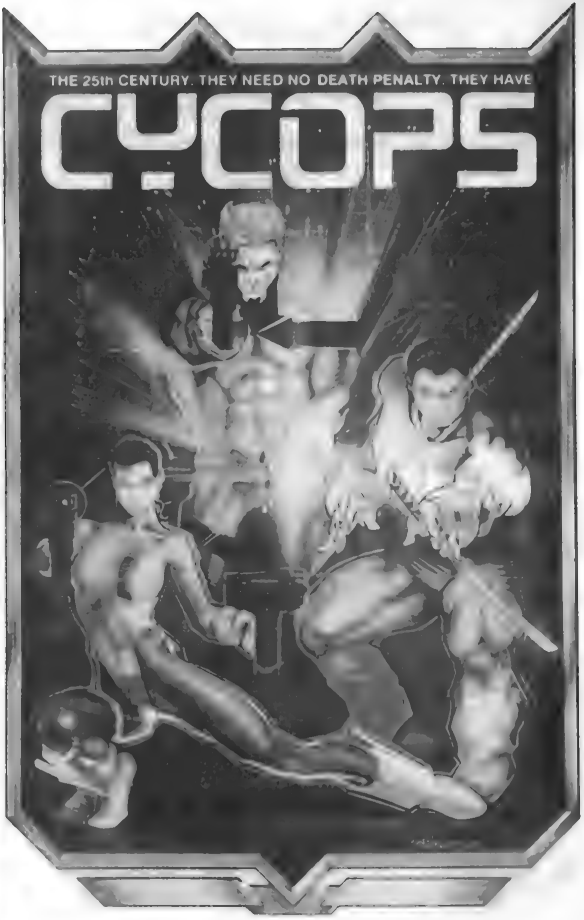
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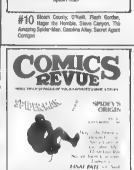

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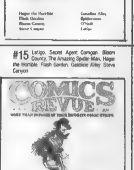

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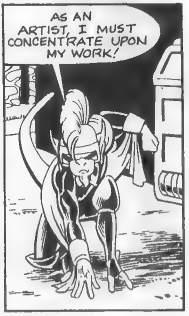

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"I was on DYNASTY for half a season."

BILL CAMPBELL

Here and throughout this interview: scenes from the Disney movie production THE ROCKETEER, with Bill Campbell and Jennifer Connelly, among many more — including Timothy (James Bond) Dalton as the villain.

Very few actors, in their first feature film role, get the starring, title role in a big-budget summer blockbuster. Bill Campbell is one of those lucky few, cast as Cliff Secord, the Rocketeer, in this summer's movie version of Dave Stevens' fan-favorite action series set in the 1930s. I began the interview with some questions about Campbell's beginnings . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Just so we can really take this from the beginning, give us some background on yourself: Where do you hail from? What's your educational background?*

BILL CAMPBELL: I'm from Charlottesville, Virginia. It's probably best to start with how I got into acting. I was in commercial art school, studying in Chicago, and I had a friend who was studying to be an actor there. He said, "You gotta come check this out," and I did, and it was interesting. So after two years of art school, I dropped out and started studying acting. I did that for a year or so, then went to California about five, six years ago.

PAT: *What art school was that?*

BILL: The American Academy of Art. What I wanted to do is illustrate comic books —

PAT: *That's fascinating, considering what you're doing now.*

BILL: Isn't it, though? I probably would have, after graduating the American Academy, gone over to **Joe Kubert's** school in New Jersey and gone at it through that route. But I got sidetracked.

PAT: *Where'd you study acting?*

BILL: I studied with a fellow named **Ted Liss,** who had a small studio on the near North Side in Chicago. I studied with him for a year and a half or so. Not a lot of people know about him, but he's really good — especially for beginning students.

PAT: *What are your other acting credits?*

BILL: I guess the first time people would have really gotten a chance to see me was on DYNASTY. I did that for half-a-season, when (I think) it was the top-rated show. It was a fairly high-profile

THE ROCKETEER is graphic novel © 1991 The Walt Disney Company all rights reserved / Rocketeer (character) © 1991 Dave Stevens

"I'd say I'm in the rocket and the helmet maybe

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IT WAS SYMBOLIC, CLIFF! HE WAS BEING CHIVALROUS.
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WHAT'LL IT BE? THE COPA? HOW 'BOUT THE SOUTH SEAS CLUB WHILE YOU'RE DREAMING.
HOW ABOUT A REAL NIGHT OUT AFTER YOU WIN THE NATIONALS?
ALL DONE!
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Here and throughout this interview, artwork from Russ Heath's adaptation of the movie.

role; I played the boyfriend of Steven Carrington. At the time, it was pretty controversial, I guess, to have a homosexual relationship on prime time.

Then I did a few episodes of different things; I did a mini-series with **Richard Chamberlain** and then I got a part on a cop show called CRIME STORY. I did that for two seasons. Then after that, back to episodic guest shots.

Then I was trying to get into features. Finally, it happened.

PAT: *How did you get cast as the Rocketeer?*

BILL: God knows! It was a fairly routine thing for me. I went to a reading, then a test, then another test. It was a fairly long process — between the reading and my first test was a huge period of time. I just figured it had gone away . . .

PAT: *Which these projects have a tendency to do . . .*

BILL: Yeah. But I just mean for me the possibility of getting the job had disappeared.

I guess it hadn't. They tested so many people, read so many people, that everything just took a long time. The first time I read for the part, I met (director) **Joe Johnston** and **Chuck Gordon.** I had just finished working at the Renaissance Fair down in Orange County, doing **Shakespeare,** and I had a beard and long hair. They looked at me when I walked in like they thought I was the janitor who had strolled into the wrong room.

PAT: *"This guy doesn't look at all like Cliff — what's he doing here?"*

BILL: Exactly. And I was terribly self-conscious.

But, then, they called me back in for the test. I heard they called me back in for the test because they had to round out the day — they were testing two other people, but they couldn't *just* test two people. They had to round out the day with another, and Joe picked my name off a list. "Well, we haven't seen him in a

15% of the time — which is a fair amount."

long time, let's give him a shot."

So, I came back in. I was clean-shaven, and looking a lot more Rocketeerish.

I don't know what all the behind-the-scenes things were. I *do* know I certainly wasn't a favorite at first, but things sort of swung around my way.

PAT: *Are you under any constraints about what you can tell me about the plot of the movie?*

BILL: I'm under certain general constraints; I've been asked not to give away too many details. Ask away, what do you want to know?

PAT: *This comes up because, lots of times, when costumed or semi-costumed heroes are adapted to film, there's a tendency to try and keep them out of costume — I guess because the film-makers are afraid the audience will think they look silly.*

So the question is: How often are you in that leather jacket with the rocket pack and the funny helmet?

BILL: That's not a great percentage of the time. I'm in the funny britches and the boots and the jacket almost all the time. I'm only in the rocket and the helmet when I'm flying — which I guess is a fair amount of time. I'd say I'm in the rocket and the helmet, maybe, 15 percent of the time — which is a fair amount.

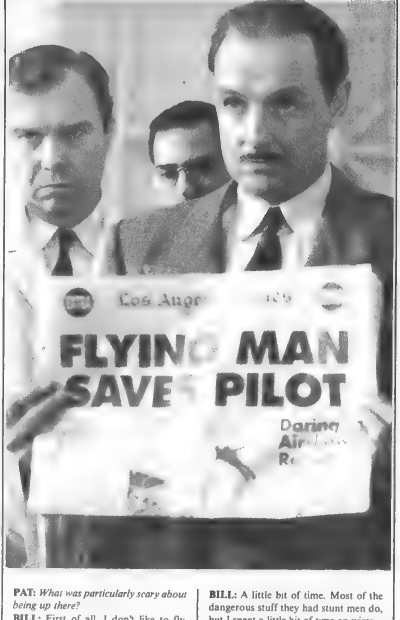
PAT: *How much of the real flying did you do?*

BILL: Obviously, they had stunt men for the more dangerous stuff.

The most frightening flying I did was in a biplane. The racing plane I fly in the film, the GB, only has one cockpit, so they couldn't do any filming *in* the GB in the air. So they mocked up the end of a three-cockpit biplane to look like the GB. They put a canopy on the back cockpit, they stuck a camera in the middle cockpit, pointing back, to me in the last cockpit, and a pilot in the front cockpit. We took off and flew around Santa Maria, California, doing a lot of low-level passes and turning around the corners of buildings and stuff.

PAT: *With you pretending to be working the controls — while the guy sitting two seats ahead of you is doing the real stuff. And, I assume, for the long shots, they had a real* one-seater?

BILL: They did. For the long shots, we had, I think, the only working reproduction of the GB in the country. Our pilot, **Craig Hoskings,** was flying that. He's probably one of the better pilots in the country; even so, he said he was counting the number of times he had to fly that plane. That tiny little plane was so squirrely that he was afraid that, sooner or later, his time was gonna come.



PAT: *What was particularly scary about being up there?*

BILL: First of all, I don't like to fly. *(Laughter.)* That was a little frightening. Secondly, the shooting we were doing mainly took place during the time when I was supposed to be in trouble in the GB — when it takes a bullet hit. Craig is up there doing his level best to make it look as if I was crashing — which meant flying around the countryside about ten feet over the treetops, wiggling and wobbling, and threading between things, making low-level passes over the runway.

PAT: *Now I know why it was so scary.*

BILL: It was horribly scary.

PAT: *Did you spend any time on wires in the rocket suit?*

BILL: A little bit of time. Most of the dangerous stuff they had stunt men do, but I spent a little bit of time on wires.

PAT: *Somebody told me that, for some sequences, they actually had some kind of working rocket pack. Is that true?*

BILL: Yeah — a working rocket pack in that it fires —

PAT: *It won't lift you off the ground . . . You didn't ever have to wear that, I take it?*

BILL: Once or twice —

PAT: *That must have been a little scary, too, to have this thing actually firing off rockets on your back.*

Did you ever actually have to do a scene — actually have to act — while you had that helmet on?

"I'm absolutely up to date on Moebius and a few others.

BILL: Sure — not a dialogue scene, but I had to do plenty of stuff with the helmet on that made it difficult to convey what you're trying to get across — when you can't use your face at all. It's an interesting problem . . . and I'm not sure how successfully I tackled it.

PAT: *Did you find yourself reverting to stage techniques, being a little broader, a little bigger?*

BILL: Exactly, definitely. Then people had to tell me to not be so big.

PAT: *Was this a very physical role for you?*

BILL: Yes, it was a fairly physical role First of all, I had to lose a lot of weight before the film began. It was physical in that way for me. I was in pretty good shape when we started out.

I had to do a fair amount of physical stuff. There's a lot of rolling, and fighting, and jumping, and swinging, and hanging on wire. All of that is pretty physically demanding. Especially when you keep the kind of hours that we keep. It's really interesting to me how my energy just sort of saps away at certain times of the day. I can be in great shape and eating well, but come a certain hour and bang! — I'm pretty much a piece of tofu. But then, you have to get up and go run a 100-yard sprint for some reason on camera. It's strange.

It is physically demanding — to have to have a fistfight at four o'clock in the morning, when you've been sitting around on the set for 12 hours.

PAT: *Why'd you have to lose all the weight?*

BILL: Just because I was a fat pig before the shoot. *(Laughter.)* I was pretty heavy — I was up to about 220 to 225 pounds. I had to lose about 20 of that.

PAT: *You're working with a young lady I had a chance to interview five or six years ago, when she did her first major motion picture — Jennifer Connelly.*

BILL: When she did LABYRINTH?

PAT: *Yeah — I interviewed her back then. I looked at her then and said, "This lady is going to be a heart-breaker when she gets to be of adult age." I'm told she is absolutely stunning.*

BILL: She transcends stunning.

What's more, her physical beauty would be absolutely unimportant if she weren't such a great all-around person. The real beauty of her is that she's just such a nice person.

PAT: *Are you familiar at all with the ROCKETEER in its comics version?*

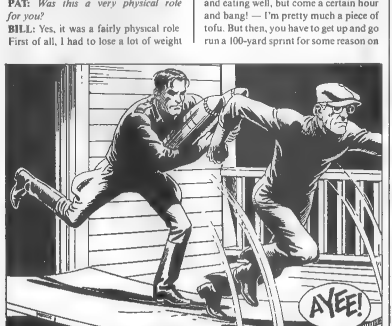
BILL: Um-hmm.

PAT: *I thought so. Since you wanted to be a comic-book artist, I assumed you maintained some interest in comics.*

This is going to seem like a really strange question: How does Jennifer compare to Dave Stevens' version of Betty?

BILL: Wow! I'll tell you — physically, she's pretty much right there. You would think that Dave had based his Betty on her. The likeness is that uncanny.

When she walked in the door for the screen test, Joe and I thought, "Wow —



More than anything, it's the artwork that involves me."

she's pretty much there." Then, when she walked out of make-up, having been done up like Betty, both of us just hung on to each other; we couldn't believe it. We knew that she was the closest thing we'd ever seen to Betty; the closest person we'd tested to Betty.

PAT: *I don't know if you've heard this yet — I read an interview with Dave Stevens recently, talking about the movie, and he hands you the same compliment: that you are, when you are in make-up and costume, to him the physical epitome of Cliff.*

BILL: *(Laughter.)* No kidding? That's great! I guess they got a couple of people they thought looked like the characters.

After Jenny tested, Joe and I both were so excited. I went and grabbed one of the comic books and ran up to her dressing room. She was changing back to leave and I had to show her what Betty looked like. She'd never seen the comic book. I said, "See — look! You're the spitting image of this girl. I think you're probably gonna get the part!" I think she was slightly embarrassed that I was so charged up about it.

PAT: *Joe Johnston, as a director, comes out of the special effects end of things, originally. How was he to work with, as an actor?*

BILL: He's great. I think he's terrific, and he's probably everything he needs to be for an actor. He had a great deal of trust in his actors. He does most of his direction of actors when he's casting, I think. This is the way I'm imagining he does it — he picks people he thinks are pretty much on target to begin with, so when he's actually doing the work, he can cruise along and worry about all the myriad things he has to worry about. If he *has* to, he can fine tune the actors.

I'm not terribly self-confident yet, so I had to maybe ask him for a little more help than some of the other more experienced people in the cast might have had to. Everyone else in the cast is more experienced than me — even Jennifer, who's like 20 now, has done nine features. But Joe was willing and able to give me the help I needed. So, I think he's a terrific director of actors — a terrific director all around.

PAT: *Are you actively interested in comics, now?*

BILL: No, I'm really not anymore. I go into a comic-book store about once every two months and look through the comics. I'm absolutely up to date on **Moebius** and a few other people. More than anything it's the artwork that involves me, so when I go into a comic-book store, I just sort of look through the racks, pick up a book and it takes me just a second to decide whether I want it or not.

I have a few favorites. **Jack Kirby** was a long-time favorite of mine. I have every KAMANDI he did, until he stopped — which is pretty much when they became worthless to me. **Russ Heath** I always loved — which is exciting for me, because I hear **Heath** is doing the adaptation of the screenplay.

PAT: *He's doing the art; I've already talked to the guy who's doing the writing — Peter David, who is an old friend of mine, with a strong background in both comics and film.*

BILL: That's really exciting for me, to think I'm gonna be drawn by **Russ Heath.**

So, **Russ Heath, Jack Kirby** and, of course, **Joe Kubert,** I really, really loved.

PAT: *If you liked Kubert and Heath, you must have devoured DC's war comics during the '60s.*

BILL: Definitely. And it was really exciting for me when **Kirby** was doing THE LOSERS, and then **Severin.** I like him, too — but he's not in the same ballpark, to me.

I like **Kubert,** most of all, because his drawings were so atmospheric and moody.

So, I'm sort of a dilettante at this time.

PAT: *Peter seemed to be under more*

"I guess I can tell you, Timothy Dalton is the villain."

constraint than you seem to be — maybe you can help us fill in some gaps.

He said that unlike what Stevens had done in the comics, there was a real focused villain in the movie. What's the villain like?

BILL: I guess I can say — what can I say? He's a *really evil guy.* I guess I can tell you that **Timothy Dalton** plays the villain and that he's a Hollywood movie star of the period. That's probably really all I can tell you about him, except to say he's a bit lecherous . . . and he's trying to put the moves on my girl which, of course, I don't appreciate. But there's far more to him than I'm letting you in on – than I think I'm *able* to let you in on.

PAT: *Where does Bill Campbell's career go from here?*

BILL: I don't know — maybe you should ask him. *(Laughter.)*

Hopefully, I get to do more feature film work. That's what I would like to do. Television is a real grind. It can be really difficult I heard somebody liken it to going up the proverbial creek without a paddle. You may have a strong start, you may do really well for awhile, but at the end, your canoe is really only made of toilet paper. It's sort of a no-win proposition a lot of the time, due to the time and money constraints. It becomes a grind that gets really difficult for everyone.

I've done that for awhile I'd like to do some feature films. I'd like to get in a decent work situation and have a good time.

Even in the feature films, there are obviously time constraints, but it's not quite the crunch that TV is.

PAT: *It's not turn-out-50-minutes-every-seven-days-or-be-in-trouble.*

BILL: Exactly. Even then, if you find yourself in a feature film you're not pleased with, it's over in two months. But in a TV series, if you're not pleased with it —

PAT: *— and it's a hit —*

BILL: — it's over in five or six years.

PAT: *Are you expecting to be out on a publicity tour for this thing?*

BILL: I don't really know yet. I haven't talked to them in detail about what we're going to do with regard to publicity. I imagine we'll do something like that.

PAT: *Think you'll have to strap on the jacket and the helmet again?*

BILL: I don't know if they'll *ask* me to do that for publicity, but I can tell you whether or not I am going to: No, I am not. *(Laughter.)*

"Most of the time I can guess what's going to happen."

GENE COLAN

In part one of this interview, Gene "the Dean" shared secrets of his early days in comics — from HOPALONG CASSIDY to DC, EC, Dell and BEN CASEY through Warren, the early days of the Marvel Age, DRACULA, DAREDEVIL and on to BLACK PANTHER.

Here in part two of this epic conversation with Colan, Gene rates his inkers and offers his opinions on the ins and outs of comics art . . .

DAVID HAMILTON: *How much influence on you, as far as construction, design and approach to a comic page, have others had, such as Syd Shores?*

GENE: Syd showed me a lot of drawing, which I knew *beans* about when I started. I didn't know a lot of things. He showed me how to approach certain things, how to draw the figure better than I was doing. I remember, I was trying to draw a picture — I was hired by Marvel, I was working on staff — I had a shot to do of a girl standing in front of a mirror, putting on some makeup. It was a full-length shot, and I just could *not* get it right. I knew it was wrong but I didn't know what to do with it. So I went to Syd and I asked him, and in two seconds he had the whole thing drawn out so beautifully and so *naturally*, you know. That's where I got a lot of my learning and training from. But my visualization has always been because of film.

DAVID: *That's what I thought.*

GENE: Always. It's always been my *biggest* influence in whatever I do in comics.

DAVID: *How did it feel years later when Syd Shores began inking your DAREDEVIL work?*

GENE: He always did great work, but I felt that his career had taken an unjustified bad turn. I feel very badly about it, and I think of Syd to this very day. I don't know what's become of his family. I met his wife once, and I think he had a daughter. I just felt terrible for Syd. He was a very talented, very able, *capable* artist, as good as *anybody* in the business. And his career just fell apart.

DAVID: *The tragedy of it was that Marvel was actually starting to bring him back as a penciller right before he died.*

GENE: Yes. I wish he had lived to have experienced some better times. I really do, because he was a sweet man. He was a very nice man.

DAVID: *My favorite inker that did any work on you would be John Tartaglione, who did 13 or 20 odd issues of DAREDEVIL. He had such a fluent inking style on your work. This was way back when Daredevil had the split personality, where he had the "brother." How would you feel when you would see the work published and see how the inker had interpreted your pencils?*

GENE: Sometimes I liked it, sometimes I didn't. Most of the time it came out pretty good. Some inkers are better than

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"The best inker I ever had, I think, has

others. The best inker I ever had, I think, has been **Tom Palmer.** But there have been some close runners-up. There's an artist that recently passed away, **Frank Giacoia,** he was just wonderful. I *loved* his stuff. Bold! I just loved his work. But his career, too, fell apart. A very capable man, another example.

DAVID: *Now, Tom Palmer has inked more pages of your work than any other single inker.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *But you've had other inkers that have been very able.*

GENE: Yes, I have.

DAVID: *George Klein.*

GENE: Yes, I remember him. He did a great job. I liked **George Klein,** he was a sweet man too, *another* one. A great dresser, a good looking fellow, *very* good looking guy. He wore a homburg.

DAVID: *Kind of like a Winsor McCay of comics.*

GENE: Yeah! A real dresser, you know. He had a ruddy complexion and just a sweet, soft-talking fellow. I remember him

DAVID: *But you've kind of had an up and down relationship with inkers. I'm looking at a list here of just the top 40. Bob McLeod did some magnificent work on JEMM and a few other projects of yours.*

GENE: Yes

DAVID: *How did you feel about his inking?*

GENE: Well . . . capable. I've had other inkers --

DAVID: *Dan Adkins.*

GENE: Yes, another very capable inker

DAVID: *Bill Everett.*

GENE: Bill Everett, yes.

DAVID: *Dick Ayers.*

GENE: Dick Ayers, very good.

DAVID: *Klaus Janson.*

GENE: Very good

DAVID: *Now, I would say you were unjustifiably hit with . . . I don't want to say no-talent inkers, but bad inkers no-talent inkers, what the hell.*

GENE: Yes

DAVID: *Now finally you've come back, first coming out with work reproduced from your pencils, then finally getting back with Tom Palmer on BLACK PANTHER*

GENE: Yes, but what would look more like me is *me!* I'm inking from this point on *anything* that I do.

DAVID: *Oh, fantastic!*

GENE: Yeah I'm inking the covers, everything.

DAVID: *Great. Are you using brush or pen?*

Shot from the original art (then, twice-up) of panels from

GENE: Mostly brush, I'm generally a brush man. I use *some* pen, but mostly brush. For anyone interested, #3 brush.

(Laughter.)

DAVID: *Now, SILVERBLADE bombed completely.*

been Tom Palmer. I just loved his work."

GETTING HOTTER BY THE SECOND!
THE PAIN-- TOO INTENSE-- CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER--!
IF--THIS S GONNA BE--MY FINISH--
AT LEAST-- I'LL GO OUT-- FIGHTING!!
A LAUDABLE AMBITION--
--ALTHOUGH IMPOSSIBLE, ALAS, TO CARRY OUT!

DAREDEVIL #21, Oct. 1966. This was Colan's 2nd issue on D.D. (eventually tallying 1762 pages).

GENE: I knew it was going to happen.

DAVID: *I knew it after I read the first issue, but it was still beautiful! But the inking was probably the worst inking that you've ever had.*

GENE: Well, that's true. He was inconsistent. He was good at times, and other times not so good. But I must say, I think he tried his best. And there were times

"I made up my mind very early that I was going to

...AS A STRANGE COALESCING BEGINS IN THE DUSTY COOOW...
...A COMING-TOGETHER OF ANCIENT, MARKS, OF LONG-DISPARATE ASH...
HE DOESN'T SEE THE RETURNING ATOMS, RELEASED FROM THE LIMBO TO WHICH THE SEALING STAKE HAD CONDEMNED THEM...
...HE DOESN'T SEE THAT...
...DRACULA LIVES AGAIN!
...THAT SOUND...?
NOOOOOO!

Above: Gene's very first work on Marvel's DRACULA series. Gene pencilled & inked these panels. Next page: Gene drew his inspiration for *his* Dracula from the features of actor Jack Palance. Interestingly — Palance didn't play DRACULA until 2 years later (on the CBS Friday Night Movie World Premiere: 2/8/74, produced & directed by Dan "DARK SHADOWS/ NIGHT STALKER" Curtis).

that I just *loved* his stuff. A good number of times I didn't. But I think that everyone in the business has their favorites, and who can be so consistent anyway! I'm certainly not consistent in the work. There are times when I just can't get with it —

DAVID: *I think that's a lot of bull.*

GENE: No, really, I don't feel that I am.

DAVID: *Well, I've seen well over 10,000 pages of your work and I'll tell the readers right here and now that you are literally the most consistent comics artist ever!*

GENE: Thanks

DAVID: *Even Jack Kirby isn't as consistent as you. Jack Kirby was great for an unbelievable amount of time, as was Steve Ditko and various other artists. But if we compare your work today with something you did, say, in 1964, you can't tell there's 25 years difference. You established your style so early, as I said earlier, and that's why I said it was so unusual.*

GENE: Well, again, I made up my mind very early that I was going to attempt to be the best that I could be, and the best in the business. That's what my intention was. Now, there are many artists that are, in *my* opinion, as good if not better than I am.

DAVID: *Like who?*

GENE: Well, I'll tell you who I personally like as an artist. I think **John Buscema** is a *very* talented guy.

DAVID: *Oh, he's very good.*

GENE: Very *very* good. When he's at his best you can't beat him!

DAVID: *But he's rarely at his best because he's usually just kind of hacking the stuff out.*

GENE: Well, he's got a completely different way. of thinking about the business. Let's face it, he's very com-

be the best that I could be, the best in the business."

mercial and he knows how to make a buck.

DAVID: *I always considered John Buscema to be the Burne Hogarth and you to be the George Bridgman of comics.*

GENE: *(Laughter.)* Yeah, well. I've always admired John's work — *always!* And there was a fellow – unfortunately he copied *too* much of **Caniff's** *style* — **Lee Elias.** He's known for it, actually; I'm not saying anything that no one doesn't know about. I loved his stuff, too. There was a fellow who did a strip called THE VIGILANTE, **Mort Meskin.** I loved his style of work, just *loved* it. There were so many good artists in the business –

DAVID: *But there are not many left today.*

GENE: No.

DAVID: *A lot of the people that were great way back when either don't do anything in comics today, or the work they do is substandard. Do you think that the change from two-up to one-and-a-half-up has had an influence on these individuals, yourself, whoever?*

GENE: I've always liked to do it the smaller way, one-and-a-half-up. That's not the biggest way it's ever been. I like it that way because it consolidates everything and enables me to make better time, and get to see the pictures all at once. It gave me a smaller area to work in, a more *comfortable* area to work in.

The bigger way was a little too intimidating. "God, look at this big page in front of me, and I've got to *fill* it!" The other way you get a smaller page and it's easy to fill, and you can see everything all at one time. I just work better that way, and I think that the reproduced work looks better. When you work that large and then have to bring it down to comic-book size, something is really lost.

DAVID: *There seems to be a lot lost in Jack Kirby's and Steve Ditko's works when they went down to one-and-a-half-up, but I didn't notice any problems with your work. Why do you think that is?*

GENE: I don't know, the way they think? I don't know. Everybody brings a different quality of thinking to their work. It doesn't mean that mine was any better, it's just the way it worked out. I find one-and-a-half-up very comfortable. I learned all about it from **John Severin.** I saw him doing it and I said, "Gee, why can't I work like that?" And I found all I had to do was ask Stan.

DAVID: *Approximately what year was this, 67?*

GENE: It was the late '50s, it started in the '50s, the late '50s.

DAVID: *But not all companies had*

"It's impressive. But when it's reduced to

Unpublished cover from DAREDEVIL #43 by Gene (the inking was done over a decade later by Steve Leialoha).

switched over.

GENE: No.

DAVID: *I have seen some SPIDER-MAN pages by Ditko from the mid '60s that were two-up, like posters.*

GENE: Yes, that's right.

DAVID: *Incredible. Your wife was telling me the other day how incredible your early pages were —*

GENE: The thing is when you *look* at it in person it looks *great* because it's so big. It's impressive. But when it's reduced down to comic-book size, all that impressiveness is lost.

DAVID: *I don't agree. I think it's intensified because the work is sort of like concentrated power.*

GENE: I see what you mean, you're probably right. Actually, if you tend to put more in it because you have more space to work in, then more appears on the printed page. But if the same panel were smaller then you would tend to put maybe not as much in, because you don't have to. It *could* be a psychological thing.

DAVID: *That's possible.*

GENE: You're not aware of the fact that you're putting in more work because it's so large.

DAVID: *When you were working on DOCTOR STRANGE the first time around, was that one-and-a-half-up or was that two-up?*

GENE: I . . . hm? It might have been two-up, I don't remember. I think it *was*

comic-book size, all that impressiveness is lost."

two-up.

DAVID: *Roy Thomas mentioned that when he heard that Tom Palmer was going to be inking your work, he was* horrified. *Apparently he didn't know a whole heck of a lot about Tom Palmer, but once he saw the first job he was really impressed.*

GENE: Yes.

DAVID: *Were you equally as impressed with those first few jobs that he worked on?*

GENE: Yes, I was. I could see that he had a *strong* stroke, and that —

DAVID: *And he knew how to draw.*

GENE: Oh, he knows how to draw.

DAVID: *That's important for a good inker.*

GENE: Very! It's essential! But not always. Some inkers can just know where to put the lights and darks, but when it comes to the pencilling part of it they are weak.

DAVID: *Yeah, but you're also unique in the sense that you very rarely leave anything to chance in your pencils. It's all there.*

GENE: Well, a lot of people have said it's *not* all there, and then it suddenly *appears* there. A lot of the things I do — I'm probably unconscious of it — but they're *subtle!* They don't show up right away, or the eye doesn't focus on a certain part of a panel right away. But the more you look at it *certain* things start to show up, you know what I mean?

DAVID: *Well, for instance . . . This is not necessarily subtle but it's something that interests me — you've done something in comics that I haven't seen, really, much of anyone do to any great effect, and that is the blurred/multiple-image panel. A lot of times you did it with a full page, especially in DAREDEVIL. You see something at various moments in movement over, say, a period of a minute, or less, in one panel. Do you consider that you coined that as an effect almost by yourself? No one else really does it to any great effect.*

GENE: I've gotten that idea from photography, from seeing multiple photographs of, like, runners. It's a blurred effect, but you see it many times in motion, and it creates a nice motion effect. I did that in BLACK PANTHER where he's doing a somersault inside a building and he's going to land on the villain, and the villain has a knife and is about to do someone in with his knife. Black Panther has to think quickly and so he leaps and does a flip and lands on the man's arm in such a way that he locks his feet around the hand that's holding the knife. And then the two of them go to the mat, you know. It turned out to be a four-panel situation.

I try to create the effect like you see quick intercuts in a film where something flashes by on the screen. It's so quick you know something went by but you didn't have enough time for it to register. What did register is what the director wanted; he wanted you to get the feeling that whatever you saw went by very quickly.

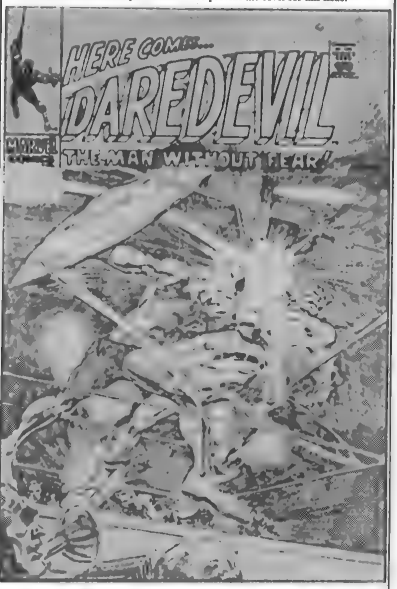
DAVID: *The reason I brought that up is because it's something in your work that's always been very interesting to me. I always considered you to be the king of doing that, just as in the same way I feel that Jack Kirby always has been the king of multiple movement within one panel where Captain America would be hitting seven different people with different parts of his body.*

GENE: Yes!

DAVID: *In the same way, you would show someone moving — sometimes it's been as many as fifteen different images within a panel — flipping over, zooming back, flipping again, twisting, coming down, bouncing, etc. etc. etc.*

GENE: Yeah, I love that because it makes it fun! It's a challenge. I'm into the

The original "unpublished" cover for DAREDEVIL #43 — for some unknown reason Jack Kirby was called in to provide the cover for this issue.



Unpublished (finished) cover for DOCTOR STRANGE #180 (1st series) by Gene & Tom. Oddly, the cover that was used was little more than a collage of previously printed material by Steve Ditko and Gene Colan.

On the Panther: "I did it before, I like the character."

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NATHANIEL DUSK (book three).

art of it, and I want the reader to see something a little different.

DAVID: *But what's interesting is that since you don't really have an out and out love for super-heroes, what we're talking about is not something that you would really be able to use —*

GENE: It depends on the situation.

DAVID: *Why do you still keep coming back to super-heroes even though you are not really nuts about them?*

GENE: It's just the opportunity that's presented to me at the moment — that's how I actually got back into doing work for Marvel again, from DC. I had an opportunity to do BLACK PANTHER. I did it before, I like the character, and I just went for it. I don't think I was in any position to say, "No, I won't do it." I *wanted* to get involved with Marvel again and here was my opportunity, and I wasn't about to turn it down. Aside from that, Don was writing it and we were a good team for a long time, and we're *still* a good team. Actually, he was very instrumental in me getting that particular strip.

DAVID: *He wanted you.*

GENE: Yes, so I grabbed it. And other things followed.

NEXT ISSUE: *Gene continues his reminiscences with memories of trying to get into the movie industry with the help of Sigourney Weaver, his work with Archie Goodwin, Harvey Kurtzman, Jack Kirby, among others, and the class he teaches on the "Art of Comic-Book Drawing."*

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

ROCKIN' AT CONTINUITY WEST

Dear DAK,

Credits on the cover of issue #89 of COMICS INTERVIEW stand! The top half — the flying Rocketeer — is all Neal. The colouring was by either/both **Ginger Karalexis** and **Jeff Wells.** The Betty half was roughed very loosely by Neal and that was drawn by myself and **Del Barras;** Neal then came back to ink it.

On the rest of the job, the story boards would be loose scribbled layouts by Neal.

All the rest of us would get reference from the morgue file on uniforms and such and draw in everything else from the Disney reference or from **Dave Stevens'** own ROCKETEER comic books. Neal would give it the once-over, telling us what should be changed or corrected, and when that was finished he inked either faces or figures. Then it would go to **Del Barras** or any one of us working on the job to ink our own background or design anything else.

Neal would at times do the whole frame — draw and ink it. The pressure was on — yet it was a good studio to work in! **Brian Apthorp** would talk of his acting ambitions (he's done a fair amount in theatre already) and nearly all the guys are musicians. (I enjoyed their company so much I took all the guys out for lunch.) Another fellow who worked on the job was Filipino artist **Ronnie Del Carmen.**

But to get back to the original point about COMICS INTERVIEW #89 cover credits: It was and still is by **Adams, Power** and **Barras.** Colours by **Karalexis** and **Wells.** In my interviews I make sure that credit is given to those in question. It's one of my pet peeves when people are "left in the dark" or simply forgotten. I *don't* do that!

Last note: The introduction to the **Adams** interview should have read that I worked with **Dave Stevens** in 1979 — not 1974 — at Hanna-Barbera.

Cheers,

Paul Power
Los Angeles, CA

WHO CREATED WHAT?

People,

The Great **Stan Lee — Jack Kirby** debate reminds me of other such conflicts where nobody can decide "who created what."

Lennon and **McCartney, Lerner** and **Lowe, Gershwin** and **Gershwin, Leopold** and **Loeb,** Rocky and Bullwinkle, Dick and Perry . . .

Let's face it — **Paul McCartney** said it best when he recently stated: "Nobody knows what went on in that little room, but me and John."

I'm sure Stan and Jack would agree.

Lon Wolf
2118 Ryan's Run East
Maple Shade, NJ 08052

MARVEL BULLPEN NOT DEAD! (NEITHER IS PAUL McCARTNEY)

G'DAY DAK,

I just heard from **Tim Burgard** re: his interview in #94. It seems Marvel got pissed off — then in the next breath offered him some work. Tim had made the comment that the Marvel Bullpen was dead. Ha! Ha! It was a joke. Even if this were true — how the hell would Tim or I know? We don't work for them so it's like my PMS comment about Storm in Marvel's/Claremont's X-MEN soap opera. That question I put to **Marc Silvestri;** it, too, was a joke — although bad taste on my behalf. I guess it comes down to this: I'm from Australia — straightforward with my foot in my mouth at times. So in my interviews I go for a little of what makes an artist tick — i.e., how? why? when? — then throw in some humor. I'm sorry if some are offended but that's my style. Besides, as you know, I do these interviews for fun and hope fans (like me!) enjoy these little talks. So it looks like **Tim Burgard,** in spite of his good-natured Marvel comment, will be drawing Marvel's TERMINATOR comic book.

Paul Power
3413 Maceo St. #3
Los Angeles, CA 90065

HERE'S WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ!

Dear DAK,

Bravo to **Julia Mather** for her editorial in COMICS INTERVIEW #95! I've known for a long time "Why Johnny can't read" — it's because his teachers won't let him read what he *likes,* but insist on forcing dull "classics" and formula-ridden, pap-filled primers on him. You wouldn't learn to read either, if it that were all the reward you got out of it!

Personally, I just don't see the appeal of TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES. But if the kids like it — hey, I'd rather see them read that than *not* read something supposedly more wholesome and educational.

My children's bookshelves are filled with **Dr. Seuss, Laura Ingalls Wilder, L. Frank Baum,** and other authors they respond favorably to. How do I know they respond favorably to these? Because I've read these books to them, and I've *seen* them respond favorably. Some of the books I've tried reading to them didn't get such response. Those were quickly closed, and their authors dropped from our curriculum.

The lower portions of my own bookshelves, the ones they can reach and are encouraged to frequent, contain such items as a full set of Gladstone and Disney albums, ELFQUEST, and Eclipse's POGO reprints. Oh, and Kitchen Sink's NANCY, which, again, I don't personally care for but the kids peruse by the hour.

The result? My first-grader, who at age two was diagnosed as retarded, is now reading at the fourth-grade level. And my second-grader — I have *no idea* where her limits might be, but I know they're beyond those of her classmates.

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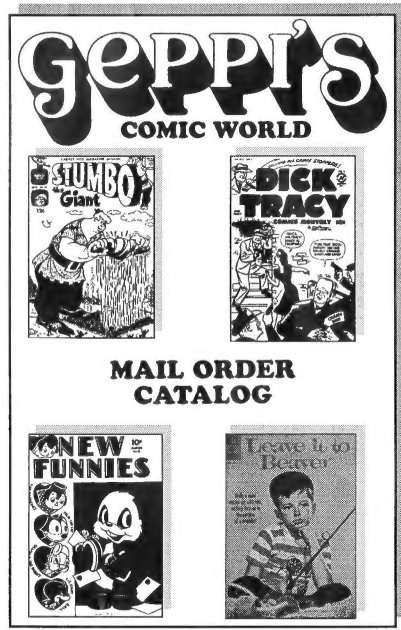

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